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To -

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With our love

and

best wishes always -

From -

Sterling and Bill

December 1957.

HR Mar 1964 Love

HR

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PASTORAL
PRAYERS

The Centenary Pulpit

A COLLECTION OF PASTORAL PRAYERS

By Dr. Mark Depp



CENTENARY METHODIST CHURCH

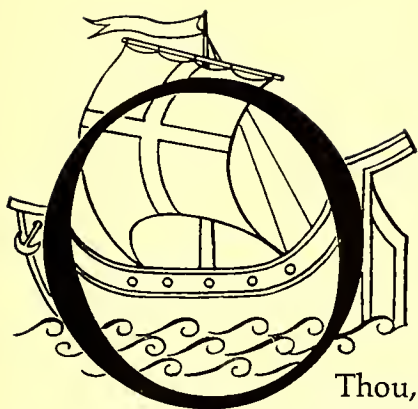
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

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The Centenary Pulpit





Thou, by whom we come to God, the Life, the Truth, the Way; the path of prayer Thyself hath trod: Lord, teach us how to pray!" Humbly, our Father, we make the words of the old hymn our petition this morning. Sometimes how earnestly we pray for some things which we ought not to have and which certainly are far less than the best Thy holy and loving wisdom has for us; and then sometimes how indifferent we are to the things of greater value, pouring out our souls in desire for that which is second best and then unmindful and careless of those things which matter most. And we humbly pray, our Father, that Thou wilt hear us not for what we ask but for what we need. How often we are like children who cry in the night and with no language but a cry, and how we come flinging ourselves on Thy loving wisdom and Thy righteous purpose—children in their dependence and their need seeking the guidance and the wisdom and the strength of the Father.

We thank Thee, O God, for those hours of insight and of understanding and of vision; those hours "when the spirit's true endowments stand out clearly from its false ones"—for them we are grateful. But we lift our prayer this morning that we might have courage and grace and steadfastness to hold steady when the road is long and when the burden is heavy and when the day is drab.

Help us to understand that we fulfill our high calling under God in the fidelity which we show in the dark day and in the difficult place. We come lifting before Thee our prayer for all those of any name or sign who this holy day come to Thee in devout worship. Make real to them, we pray Thee, the treasures of grace—a fresh sense of Thy presence, a new confidence in Thee—the pressure of the guiding Hand—the leading of the kindly Light.

But we come praying, likewise, for those who do not look to Thee in humble and devout worship but who should; not less needy because unconscious of their need—for them, too, we pray that something may come, something may happen; some word, some remembrance, some bit of longing that will turn wayward thoughts and willful spirits to the great source of life. Thou art the fountain freely flowing for us all. Help us to hear the voice of the Son of God as He calls us to stoop down and to drink and to live. And let, we humbly pray, the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts, no less, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.





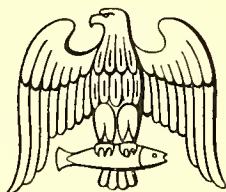
Lord, Thou hast searched us and known us. Thou knowest our downsitting and our uprising. Thou understandest our thoughts afar off and art acquainted with all our ways. Whither shall we go from Thy spirit or whither shall we flee from Thy presence? If we ascend up into heaven Thou art there"—far beyond our highest thought, our noblest concept. And if we make our beds in hell Thou art there, for no one of us may fall lower or wander farther than Thy mercy. Thine is the light that follows all our way and the love that will not let us go. If we say that darkness will conceal us—darkness and light are both alike to Thee. "Search us, O God, and know our hearts. Try us and know our thoughts. See if there be any wicked way in us and lead us in the way everlasting."

Thus, our Father, in the ancient and measured cadences of Thy Word we come this morning to make our humble confession and to offer our earnest prayer. Let us, we beseech Thee, be no strangers to the questing spirit which is ours at our best, for if we are of the earth earthy, as we are, are we not likewise of the heavenly heavenly? Help us not to despise our birthright or to treat casually our heritage. And for the aspiration of our hearts, for the wistfulness and the yearning of spirit, for the something about us that marks us kin with Thee, for that we thank Thee.

Forgive us, Lord, that so often we trail our garments in the dust. Forgive us that so often we forget our sonship with Thee. Make us more and more aware of the great word of the Book that we are the sons of God. Give us Thy grace, we pray Thee, as we seek to hold in proper and wholesome balance these Christian graces and virtues about which we think and read. Help us to be compassionate without softness. Help us to be humble without weakness. Help us to be strong without pride.

Give us some part in the company of those who lose themselves in the faithful and loving service of God. Give to us, we pray Thee, an insight into Thy Word. Give to us some understanding of human life. Give us the grace to look at the world about us with clear and steady eyes and yet believe in the best and to hope for it.

And in this hour as we wait before Thee, speak to us we pray—filling our minds with truth and wisdom, filling our hearts with love, and kindness, filling our hands with usefulness and giving us some humble part in the company of those who know Thee and who seek to do Thy holy will. Hear us, O Spirit of God, because out of our need we lift our prayer in the spirit of our Lord. Amen.





Thou who art the “Lord of all being, throned afar, whose glory flames from sun and star; the center and soul of every sphere”, yet so near to each loving heart that Jesus taught us to call Thee Father—Who art caring for us, drawing near to us, loving us—the greatest of friends, the truest of teachers, the dearest of comrades—forgiving us, redeeming us, saving our lives from destruction; we draw near to worship on this holy day and in this holy place bringing to Thee our common praise, our common gratitude, our common penitence and making to Thee our common prayer.

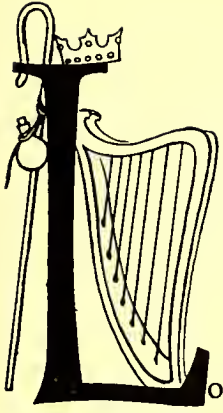
We are not unmindful of our unworthiness, O God, even as we draw near in worship—perhaps for that very reason the more mindful of our weaknesses. Thou art perfect in goodness and we are marked by flaw and fault and defect. Thou art perfect in love and we are not always loving or lovable. Thou art perfect in wisdom and we grope our way so often amid the shadows. Thou art righteous altogether. How could we come—how would we dare come to lift so much as our eyes to Thee, let alone our voices, except we come with penitence in our hearts? And grant to Thy people everywhere here in this sanctuary this morning, listening in to this service and all who draw near by faith—grant them so much of humility and so much of earnestness and so much of

wistfulness and yearning that this may be for them a high hour of the soul and that this place may be for them the very gate of heaven.

We bring our prayers, our Father, for those whose names even now we whisper in our hearts—some of them beside us in the pew, perhaps; some of them thousands of miles removed and yet whispering their names now. Thou dost know them so much better than we. Thou dost know them so much better than they know themselves—their hopes and their fears and their joys and their sorrows and their problems and their temptations. Even now as we whisper before Thee their names, those we love and to whom our hearts go out whether near or far, bring to them that which they most need, we beseech Thee.

And for ourselves we pray, that our hearts might be open; that our minds might be alert and kindled; that our spirits might be sensitive to Thee and to all Thy gracious coming. Send us forth from this place, we beseech Thee, having been hearers of the word to become faithful and loyal doers of it. And we pray, O God, that Thou wilt hear us this hour not for what we ask but for what we need because we bring our prayer in the spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.





Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations; before the mountains were brought forth or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." It comforts us, Eternal Father, to know that Thou art above, forever above and forever beyond all the changes of time and all the turmoil of the years—forever the same. And we who stand in the midst of the stress and strain of the years come now to cast the anchor of our faith in Thee and to rest our hearts in Thee.

We come to Thee reverently, for Thou art a great God and a great King above all gods; Thou only art the Lord and beside Thee there is no other. We come humbly, standing as we do always and evermore in need of Thy grace and of Thy mercy. Thou art God and we are but men. We come gratefully. How constant is Thy goodness and how unfailing Thy loving-kindness and tender mercy. And we come penitently. How else would we dare come, O God; for if Thou shouldst mark iniquity, who could stand? How far we have come short of Thy loving and righteous will for us and how far we come short of that which in our better moments—moments of insight and understanding—of those goals and standards which we have set for ourselves.

Especially, our Father, we pray for those who are in particular

need—of comfort, some; of strength, some; of encouragement, some; of fellowship, some—but all of us standing in need of a new sense of Thy nearness, a new consciousness of Thy presence on all the field of life.

We lift our prayer for the children and the youth of the church and the world, especially in this season of the year when the tramp of their feet going to school and to college fills our ears. Forgive us, O God, that we have given them a world as disorganized and as discontented and as jealous and selfish as this—nation set against nation, oft—and within nations group against group too much; class divided from class; even the church, Thy church divided tragically. Forgive us and help us to be patient with them as they seek to build a better world than they have inherited and a better world than we have made. And help them to remember their Creator in the days of youth, that evil days of bitterness and disillusionment may never come. Be to them guide and guard through all the changing experiences of life, keeping them in all their ways, keeping them in all Thy will. And let, we pray Thee, let Thy kingdom come in all the earth; for we pray it in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen.





Infinitely great and holy art Thou, O Lord God, Heavenly King, Father Almighty. Thou art from everlasting to everlasting and yet Thou art the gracious and tender shepherd of the hurrying years of men. Thou dost dwell in light which we cannot approach nor understand, yet Thou art the gracious comrade of the shadowed ways of earth. Thou art the righteous Father, righteous in all Thy ways, yet Thou art the Father of infinite compassion. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him." Thou art perfect in wisdom and yet how very patient with us as we grope our way in folly and in ignorance and in darkness.

O God, who art not beyond answering to our deepest need, we come now to bow in this mystic fellowship of prayer, here in this holy place with its memories and associations and on this holy day—the day of all the week the best. We do not pray that Thou wilt come to us, our Father, for we believe that Thou art here waiting for us to come to Thee. We do pray from the bottom of our hearts that we might not be unaware of Thy presence. We do not pray that Thou wilt speak to us for Thou art always speaking to us. We pray from our heart that we might not be deaf when Thou dost speak.

Here we would lift the eyes of faith to behold things very far

off and yet very near at hand, too. Here we would hear what only can be heard in the quietness of every man's soul. We come to confess our sins—not alone the dark and gross sins of the flesh that howl through life like hurricanes and tempests, although we are by no means strangers to these, but we come to confess other sins more subtle and not less strong—the bigotry which blinds us to brotherhood; the envy and the jealousy; the selfishness; the prejudice; and whatever mars the image of Christ in our hearts and lives.

And we come praying for Thy grace even as we read a moment since from the Holy Word—for grace to cast off the works of darkness and to put on the armor of light. Make in our own spirits some adequate preparation for the great day of Christendom toward which we move now with hastening feet. Hear us, O God, not because we are worthy but because we are needy and because out of our need we lift our prayer in the spirit of Jesus our Lord. Amen.





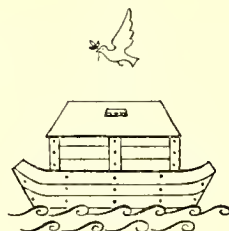
God, who art the Light of all our seeing and the Hope of all our expectations and the Goal of all our strivings, we come now in humble and devout worship to Thee. We believe that we see life most clearly and to best purpose when we see it in the light of Thy divine truth and of Thy holy will for us. Deep in our hearts we know, for we have found it in our own experience, that consciously sometimes and unconsciously often—but not less surely—we seek those things which are to be found only in Thee. “Our restless spirits yearn for Thee where’er our changeful lot is cast.”

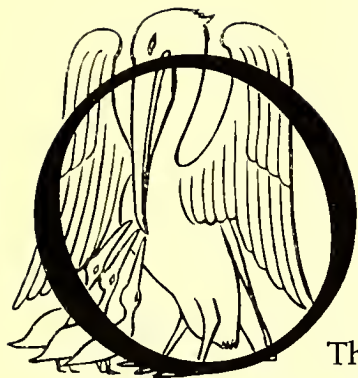
Be patient with us, O Father in Heaven, when we are blind—and foolish—and self-willed—and stubborn. We want freedom, and yet we fling away sometimes, impatient of those wholesome disciplines and those wise restraints by which freedom—real freedom—alone is to be found. We want to be happy; only Thou dost know how every one of us longs for that—and yet we are sometimes blind and indifferent to those paths which alone lead to happiness. We want to find some satisfaction for the inner thirst, the deep thirst, of our spirits; and yet sometimes we turn away from the flowing fountain of life to make our fruitless way to those broken cisterns which hold no water. Thou hast seen these same foolish and hurtful experiments made over and over again—and

dost wait in patience until, disciplined by life and humbled by failure, we make our way back again to the Fountain of all waters and to the Light that never fails.

We pray, our Father, this morning for those who are glad-hearted that they might know how to be grateful and to give some fitting expression to their gratitude. But we pray, likewise, for the heavy-hearted that they might not be in despair but that they might know the comfort and the peace of our God. We pray for those who are weak that they might be made strong in the grace and the power of God. And we pray for those who *are* strong that they might dedicate their strength to Thee.

Teach us, we beseech Thee, to learn deep in our hearts and before too much of the good day of life be spent and we have so little to show for its spending, teach us to understand that in Thy service *is* our freedom and in Thy will is our peace. Give us, we pray Thee, grace to live as they should who are children of God and who have eternity to live in. Amen.





Thou Who art most high and most loving, most holy and most compassionate, most gracious and patient; whose glory and power are reflected in the beauty of the earth and the sea and the sky; we come now to worship Thee. We lift to Thee our grateful hearts for Thy goodness which surrounds us by day and by night; and we lift penitent hearts, too, that we take so much for granted and that we forget easily and almost remember with reluctance so that our praises are scant and our gratitude weak.

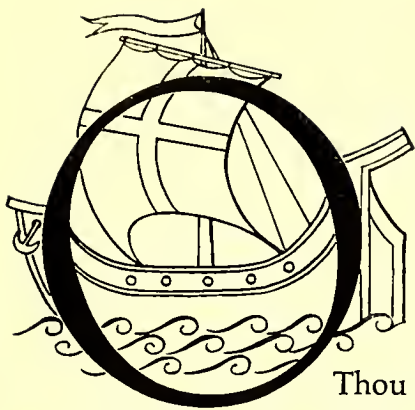
Forgive us, our Father, when we fix our thoughts on those things which make for anxieties, for doubt, for fear, for uncertainty when we might just as well fix them on those things which make for faith and steadfastness, for confidence and for courage. Forgive us, our Father, when we make so much of the things that are seen and then make so little of the things that are not seen.

We thank Thee for all the blessings and the joys of this mortal life and of this world which is our home in Thy providence; for families and friends; for work and for play; for love and for laughter. But we thank Thee, too, for that world which lies above and beyond our world—that world of the unseen and the eternal and for these dreams which lift us above the dust; for these hopes which run out beyond the horizon of the years; for the bright

promise of life that shall endless be; for all the tug of Thy Spirit and the things of eternity; for those things which will not let us be content in the midst of the things that are seen and tangible—for these we thank Thee, too.

Hear the prayer, O God, which we lift this morning for the integrity and the security of our beloved country; for the peace of the world; for the brotherhood of men everywhere; for the happiness and the welfare of those we love and who love us and whose names are now in our hearts; for those who are beside us and those who are far from us and yet not farther than thought, and love, and prayer. This morning, O God, make us sensitive to every serious thought. Make us sensitive to Thy presence, conscious that Thou art here, the nearest of friends, the truest of guides, the greatest of helpers—and save us from the sheer folly of being indifferent to Thy spirit. Let no one have come this morning and leave this house today without some insight, some uplift of his spirit; for we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.





Thou Eternal and Infinite Spirit, who art above us, greater and higher than our greatest and highest thought; who art around us, enfolding us in Thine infinite compassion and tender love; who art within us, closer to us than breathing and nearer than hands or feet; we bless Thee; we worship Thee.

Thou dost see us, our Father, as we are and Thou dost know us better than we know ourselves. The fault which we scarcely acknowledge even to ourselves; the folly and the weakness which we would hide from the eyes of men—all of these are open to Thee. Save us from the folly of pretending, even in prayer. But we thank Thee, O God, Thou dost know us in the secret place of our being for what we want to become. Thou dost see there the secret longing to be pure, to be strong, to be good. Thou dost see there the loathing and the contempt for what is weak and unworthy—"sinful, sighing to be blest; bound, yet longing to be free."

And if the thought that Thou dost see us as we are brings to us a moment of solemnity, it brings to us likewise no small satisfaction. Men look—they must look—upon the outward things, but Thou dost look upon the heart. In the secret place of our being, we beseech Thee, keep us true and loyal and good. Forgive us, we pray, our sinfulness, but forgive us likewise our shallowness and

our stubbornness and our stupidity. Be merciful to us, we beseech Thee, O God, in our wickedness, but be merciful to us likewise in our weakness; in the aimlessness and the emptiness of so much of our living.

Let Thy truth teach us. Let Thy light lead us. Let Thy spirit sustain us in the way that we should go. In times of gladness we pray that Thou wilt keep us grateful and humble; and in hours of sorrow, let not our faith in Thee fail. Hear us, because we bring our prayer in the faith and spirit of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.





God, our Father in heaven and on earth, exalted on high, yet not far from any one of us; forever beyond the full understanding of our minds, yet close to the needs and the hopes of our hearts; behold us as we come now, a company of people who bear the name and sign of Christ, in this holy place with its associations and memories and on this holy day with its reminder of the things of the spirit and of eternity to worship Thee. And as we now bow our heads before Thee, we lift up our hearts.

Here we lift our voices in songs of praise and of thanksgiving. Here we stand to declare our faith in Thee, the Father Almighty and in Jesus Christ, our living Lord; in the forgiveness of our sins and in the fellowship of the saints and in eternal life by Thy mercy. Here we come to confess our sins. We do not dare come except we come with confessions trembling in our hearts and faltering on our lips; we who have gone too much after our own ways and too little after the way of God. Here we seek Thee in the mystic fellowship of prayer, our hearts hushed that we might hear Thy voice, waiting in the quietness that Thou mayest speak to us.

Come to us, O Spirit Divine, we pray Thee, with that gift which we need most—comfort for some; forgiveness for all; guidance which we need so much; healing of the hurts of life; peace in our

souls; strength for the tasks that the days bring. Keep Thy hand upon us, O Spirit of God, whether we walk in the sunshine or in the shadow; when we walk in the shadow, lest we stumble and fall and are utterly cast down; and when we walk in the sunshine, no less, lest in too great confidence we stray from Thee and miss the path of life.

Especially on this day* with its meaning for us in this congregation, we remember with grateful hearts the dear and faithful dead who make the distant heavens a home to our hearts and whose beauty and grace are yet with us. Give to us, we humbly pray Thee, our own humble place in the church militant, doing our work as we are encouraged by their example, and lifting our testimony in the place where we stand; and then, at last, of Thy great mercy, some place in the church triumphant, which is before the throne of God.

*"Some humble door among Thy many mansions,
Some sheltering shade where sin and striving cease,
And flows forever through heaven's green expansions
The river of Thy peace." Amen.*

*Memorial Window Dedication



Thou Divine Spirit, in whose likeness we have been created, behold us now as we turn aside from the busy cares and the activities of the week to this place and on this day to worship Thee. We come, our Father, to open our minds and our hearts to Thee and we pray that here for this time the harsh and shrill sounds of the world might be still and that we might hear Thy voice; that the glitter of the world might fade and grow dim while we lift our eyes to behold the beauty of the Lord; that the clamorous and the lusty desires of the flesh might subside and that the things of the spirit and of eternity might have their chance.

We lift the eyes of faith and hope to Thee. We bend listening ears to catch the whispers of Thy Spirit. We open our hearts to the influence of Thy truth. And we pray, O Spirit of God, that Thou wouldst break down and break through the barriers which our folly and our pride, sometimes our doubt and our fear, our hesitancy, and our reluctance and stubbornness raise against Thee. Come to us, O Spirit Divine, with healing, with comfort and with peace.

Here, O Father, give us a new vision of Thyself, a new sense of Thy purpose in the world and of the mission to which we must give ourselves in devotion. We pray for a new sense of Thy pres-

ence in all the field of activity. Make us, we beseech Thee, as considerate in dealing with the faults of others as we are in dealing with our own. How easy it is to be gentle with ourselves and not gentle with others; and make us as strict in dealing with our own mistakes as we are in dealing with the mistakes of others. When we are wrong, we pray that Thou wouldst make us right, and when we are right, help us still to be gentle and kind and understanding.

Give to us in this hour of our waiting together—our praise, our prayer, our meditation—give to us, we pray Thee, such a sense of Thy nearness as may make this a high hour of the soul that we may go from this place better prepared to face the duties and the tasks of life because we face them not in our own strength, but in the strength of the Lord our God. Hear us, not because we are worthy, but because out of our need we lift our prayer in the spirit of Jesus Christ. Amen.





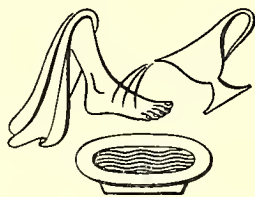
Almighty God, who hast given us grace, at this time, with one accord to make our common supplications unto Thee; and hast promised that, when two or three are gathered together in Thy Name, Thou wilt grant their requests; fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of Thy servants, as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge of Thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting." Thus, our Father, in the language of the collect of the Church we make now our own humble and sincere prayer.

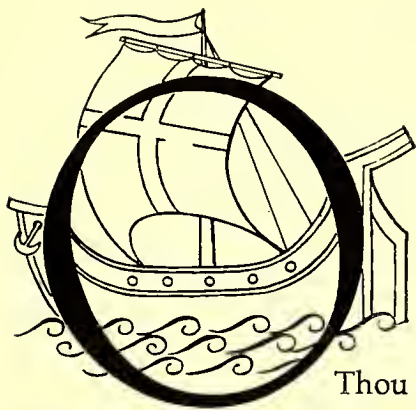
Thou hast indeed given us grace to worship Thee. We come seeking Thee because Thou art seeking us; indeed we would not be seeking Thee except in some sense we already have been found by Thee, O Spirit of God, the Light that follows all our way, the Love that will not let us go, the Joy that seeks us through all pain. We love Thee because Thou hast first loved us and we come today not pressing our way upon some reluctant and unwilling God, but rather availing ourselves of the gracious and tender and warm welcoming of the Father's heart.

Thou hast given us grace with one accord to worship Thee—adoration and reverence, thanksgiving and praise, wistfulness of our hearts, restless until they rest in Thee. And we come to make our common supplication. How varied are the needs of our hearts

today. How different are the burdens that we bear; the problems that we face; the temptations with which we grapple. Yet our need is one: a new vision of Thy face; a new sense of Thy presence; a new consciousness of Thy nearness, the greatest of comrades, the wisest of teachers, the dearest of friends.

We come praying, our Father, that Thou wilt fulfill our desires and petitions as may be most expedient for us. Who are we, children of time and circumstance and shut in by a score of limitations, to press our claims except we come to make our prayer within the framework of Thy righteous and loving will for us? Hear us, our Father, not for what we ask excepting as we ask wisely, answering us for what we need most, granting us in this world knowledge of Thy truth and in the world to come life everlasting. Sometimes we feel like reversing the familiar phrases and praying for life, here and now: knowledge can wait, if it must, but life does not wait; and knowledge of Thy truth as may make for life in its fullness. Hear our prayer, O God, as we wait now before Thee in the mystic fellowship of adoration and worship. Amen.





Thou Eternal and Infinite Spirit, who art the light of the minds that know Thee, and the joy of the hearts that love Thee, and the strength of the souls that serve Thee; help us so to know Thee that we may love Thee, and so to love Thee that we may serve Thee and in Thy service find our freedom and in Thy will our peace. Keep us in this hour from anything perfunctory, from all shallowness or superficiality of spirit. We come upon a familiar path, to be sure, yet we come into the presence of God. Let it by no chance be a matter of routine to any one of us and if any have come without alertness of mind, eagerness of heart, sensitivity, yearning for Thy presence, bring to them forgiveness, we pray, and prepare their minds and their hearts that this may be a holy hour for them.

Make us devout in our meditation, earnest in our prayer and sincere in our worship that this may become for us not alone the house of God but the very presence of God. We wait before Thee, our Father, as we bring to Thee the deepest desires and the greatest longings of our hearts. Some of them we can voice, although with halting and faltering speech; some of them lie too deep for words but Thou dost not hear us for our speaking. Thou dost hear us for the desires which are deep within us and for the longings of our hearts and the aspirations of our souls.

We come, our Father, praying for a little while the babbling voices of the world might be silent and that the cares and the burdens of life might be laid aside as we wait in Thy presence. We come not only to lift up our voices in praise but to lift up our hearts to Thee, not only our Father in heaven but our Father upon earth and near to us as may be our need. We come, O God, to declare our faith, the faith we hold and even better the faith that holds us—these moving and mighty affirmations about the great things of our holy religion. Here we come to confess our sins humbly and with earnest hearts to pray forgiveness. Here we come to seek strength for the way of life, for light on the path we must tread, for Thy grace to undergird and sustain us on all our pilgrimage.

Thou knowest our hearts and our hopes; Thou knowest our doubts and our fears. In this quiet moment let each of us lift before Thee the things which are closest to our hearts—the anxieties that beset us, the burdens which press upon us, the problems with which we grapple, the temptations that swirl about us, the concern for the welfare of loved ones. As we wait before Thee now in the blessed and mystic fellowship of prayer, do Thou, O Spirit of God, brood over our hearts in benediction. Amen.



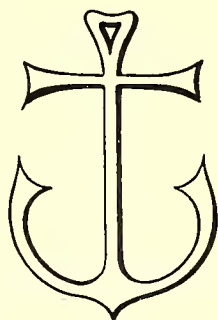
Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! Thou art exalted on high and yet not far from any one of us, the last and the least and the most lowly of Thy children. Thou art the center and soul of every sphere, of glory and majesty and power; but Thou art likewise of loving-kindness and of great mercy. Thou art infinite in holiness and righteousness which we cannot imagine or comprehend, but Thou art infinite in compassion, too, and with Thee is forgiveness of sins.

We come now to worship Thee. Let our minds be alert. Let our hearts be eager. Let us wait in patience and humility before Thee. Thou art the Father of us all—good and bad; wise and foolish—the closest to Thee; the farthest from Thee; none of us are close enough and all of us are too far away. We come with penitence in our hearts, O God; for how far short we have come of Thy great and loving purpose and will for us. How thoughtful we are of ourselves, and how often we are thoughtless of others; their fears and their needs and their trials.

We would remember them now, O God, in this mystic fellowship of prayer; those who are weighed down by the burdens and the cares of life, that they might find themselves undergirded and sustained by a strength which is not their own and which comes from Thee; those who are anxious for loved ones near and far,

that they may know the quietness of a living faith in Thee, Thy goodness and Thy love; those who are sick in body or in mind, that they may know the presence of the great Physician in all their needs; those who grapple with problems or wrestle with temptations, that Thy light may lead them and Thy truth may teach them.

Take from us we pray, O God, everything that fetters our spirits and that mars Thy likeness in us. Take away the dimness of our souls, we beseech Thee, and make us blessedly aware of Thy presence all around us and within us, seeking only our welfare. Hear our prayer, O God, not because we are worthy but because we are needy and because out of our need we lift our prayer in the faith and the spirit of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

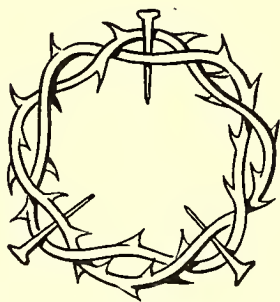




eternal God, who art higher than our highest thought and yet close to every one of us; who art forever beyond the full comprehension of our mind—for how can the finite mind of man grasp the infinite mind of God?—yet very near to the deepest needs of our hearts; we come now in devout and humble worship. Thou hast been “our help in ages past, thou art our hope for years to come; our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home.”

We come reverently, our Father, for Thou art the great and holy one of all the earth and of the universe. Thou only art God and beside Thee there is no other. We come gratefully, remembering Thy mercies which are constant and unfailing—new every morning and fresh every evening. We come penitently, remembering well this morning our own shortcomings, our failures and our mistakes; confessing—and we would not dare to come into Thy holy presence without confessions in our hearts, if not on our lips—that we have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep and have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We come in humble and earnest entreaty. How many and how constant are the needs of life! But we come, likewise, in confidence; for Thou art our Father and we are Thy children with children’s claim upon the Father’s heart and the Father’s love.

Comfort us, we pray Thee, in our sorrows. Deliver us from the cruel bondage of doubt and of fear. Enlighten our darkness and enlarge, we beseech Thee, the horizons of life for every one of us. Forgive us our sins. Heal us in the distresses which we know. Guide us lest we miss the goal. Strengthen us for whatever task the day may bring and sustain us by Thy Holy Spirit through the day of life, giving us, we pray Thee, some place in the Church militant and then soon or late, in Thy great mercy a humble part in the great company of the redeemed before the throne of God. Amen.





Thou who art most most holy and yet most loving, too; who art infinite in righteousness but of great compassion and of loving-kindness and tender mercy; who art perfect in wisdom and yet patient with us in our erring and foolish ways; we come now to worship Thee. With what wistfulness of heart we come, our Father, responding to something deep and precious within ourselves which bids us seek Thy face, the deep within us hearing and answering to the deep of God calling without, here where spirit with Spirit can meet.

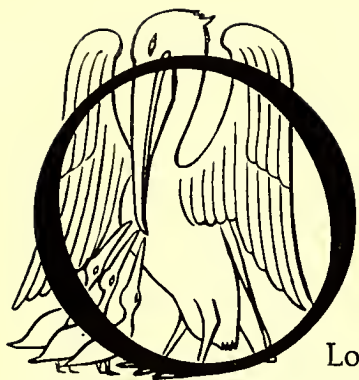
We come to take on our lips great songs of faith and hope and praise. We come to meditate on a bit of Thy holy Word, coming to us across the many centuries, speaking to us still in contemporary life. We come to open our hearts to great music so reverently and helpfully rendered. We come to bow in the mystic fellowship of prayer, seeking together what none may find alone. In wistfulness of heart we come, O Spirit of God, here in this holy place and on this holy day, where to listen is to learn. Here we lift our eyes, the eyes of faith and of hope, to see things that cannot be seen by the eye of man. Here we wait in reverence and humility to find strength renewed, making us adequate for the tasks which the day may bring.

Make us increasingly earnest in our worship, devout in medita-

tions, sincere and genuine in our approach to Thee that this may be for each of us a high and holy hour this morning. Here we would test our hearts and minds by eternal values, lest we give our attention and our interest to those things which are small and let go the things which are great. Give to us eyes that see, we pray Thee, lest we put our emphasis upon the things that are ephemeral and transient and then have little left for those things which are of abiding and eternal worth. Here we come to find again our direction, lest we be lost in the world, and for all of our going, missing the true goal.

Send out Thy light, we beseech Thee, to lead us through all the journey of life. Send out Thy truth to teach us. And send out Thy Spirit to sustain us in the way. Make us more earnest disciples in Thy school, O Master. Make us more faithful followers in the way with Thee wherever it may lead. Make us more loyal servants of Thy will in which is our peace and in whose service is our freedom. Amen.





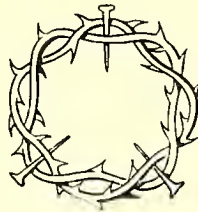
Lord our God, Thou art exalted on high far above our highest thoughts of Thee and yet Thou art near to the deepest needs of our hearts. Thou art infinitely holy but Thou art eternally loving; perfect in righteousness and yet of loving-kindness and great mercy. Thou art from everlasting to everlasting and we know full well the lash and sting of the passing years. Thou art enthroned in pure and perfect light and we still grope the shadowed ways of earth. But we come to Thee because something deep in our hearts cries out to Thee; our souls are athirst for God, for the living God. When shall we appear before God?

But we come, too, because Thou hast bidden us come. We do not come this morning pressing our way on a God who is reluctant and unwilling to receive us, but we come rather as children who make their way with confidence to the Father, conscious of their need, but confident, likewise, of the Father's love.

And so we come to open our minds to Thee again, to lift once more our hearts to Thee in sincere and humble prayer, praying that the words of our mouths might be acceptable in Thy sight. Thou art our healing and our hope. Thou art our courage and our comfort. Thou art our light and strength. Give us grace, we beseech Thee, to see Thee above all the confusion and disorder and turmoil of the years and by that may we be comforted. Give us

grace to see the baffling present and the changing things of these days against the background of Thy righteousness and sovereign purpose.

Hear our prayer, our Father, for our beloved country; for our President and those who are associated with him in the affairs of government. We are grateful that Thou hast led our people in days that are passed—the pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day. Give to us, their children, sure guidance in ways that are right and good. And we pray for those who are high in the affairs of the nations and who counsel together. Let that wisdom which is from above, gentle and kind, forbearing and forgiving, prevail. Create in all men a sense of their common brotherhood and their oneness in the family of God, and bring the nations of the world to a strong and a lasting peace, that the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. Amen.





e praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, Heavenly King; God the Father Almighty." Thus, our Father, in the lofty and noble language of Thy Church, we make our own prayer. Thou art indeed exalted on high, God forever, and we are but men who walk the humble and the lowly ways of earth, yet we are men who seek Thy face and we are men whom Thou art seeking. And if we are of the earth earthy, likewise we are of the heavenly, too, and Thou hast set eternity in our hearts and made us pilgrims of faith and of hope.

We come, our Father, to open our minds to Thee, to lift our hearts to Thee, to test those things which we think and feel and desire and plan by the light that streams from Thy face, for Thou art God and beside Thee there is no other. Give to us Thy Spirit as we seek to bring every thought and desire into glad and willing captivity to that mind which was in Christ.

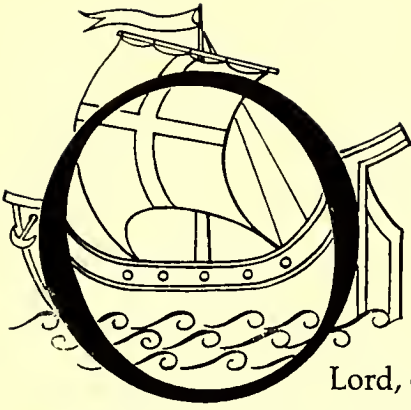
We thank Thee for those strong ties which bind us to Thee. We thank Thee for that mystic yet mighty kinship which tells us that we are spirit, kind to Thy Spirit. We thank Thee for the visions which lure us onward and upward; for the divine discontent with what we have been and what we have done; for those voices which whisper in our hearts when we are tempted to put too great confi-

dence in circumstances, "not here, but yonder." And so we come this morning in glad response to that something which is deep within our hearts. Let us not be so dull of mind, so cold of heart as to be insensitive to Thy presence, the greatest of helpers, the nearest of friends, the truest of guides.

We pray, our Father, that Thou wilt bring strength to those who are weak and for those who are discouraged that there might come encouragement; for those who seem almost beyond hope that they may hope in Thee; for the lonely that they may find fellowship; for the sorrowing that they may find comfort; and for all of us that we may be sure of Thy presence.

Thou art the great shepherd of the soul; Thou art the lover of us, every one; Thou art our guide along the path of our pilgrimage. Look upon us in this moment. We thank Thee for those who come with grateful hearts and who walk in the sunshine; let them know how to carry a full cup with thanksgiving. But we pray, likewise, for those who for any reason walk in the shadows, that they might not despair. Whether in sunshine or shadow, O God, keep Thy hand upon us and lead us home; for we pray it in Jesus' name and for His dear sake. Amen.





Lord, our God, Thou art not far from any one of us, closer to us than breathing and nearer than hands and feet, and yet Thou art He who fillest the farthest reach of the universe with Thy splendor and glory. Thou art He who inhabiteth eternity and yet Thou dost dwell with the contrite of spirit and the humble of heart. Thou art exalted and lifted up beyond anything we can imagine or understand, yet in Thee we live and move and have our being.

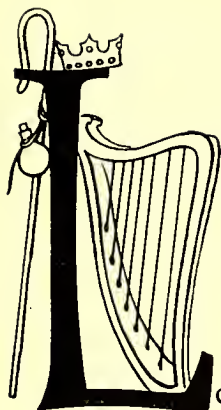
Thou dost see us as we are, our Father, as we draw near to Thee in this hour of worship. We come upon a familiar path. On how many occasions, in how many sanctuaries have we come, singing our songs of praise and of faith and of hope, bowing before Thee in the fellowship of prayer. But if we come upon a familiar path, let it not be commonplace to any one of us, or become a dull routine that has no appeal and no lure for our spirits. If we were to have today an audience with some of the great of the earth, what eagerness would be in our hearts! And yet we come this morning to Thee, King of kings and Lord of lords. Give to us a spirit of reverence and of earnestness as we come.

Some may have come to Thee in this hour not carelessly, to be sure, nor yet casually, but with no deep yearning, no wistfulness of heart, no upreach or outlook of faith or hope or desire. May

something happen here in music or sermon or scripture or prayer to bring to them the blessing of a gracious surprise. Some may have come burdened and heavy of heart, coming to cast their care upon Thee in the confidence that Thou dost care for them. Let there be for them no disappointment in this hour.

We come praying that Thou wilt forgive us our sins and as we confess them before Thee, we confess not alone those that are of the flesh, although none of us is beyond their reach and the fearful possibility of being spoiled by them, but we come to confess those spiritual vices to which we are peculiarly subject, we who name the name of Christ and who worship before God: bitterness and hardness of heart and an unbrotherly spirit. Our Father, grant us release from these things which mar the image of Christ for us and in us, and give to us increasingly Thy grace as we seek to bring every wayward thought and desire into captivity to His spirit. Make us to hear again in the secret place of our soul the exhortation of the long ago: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Amen.





ord, teach us how to pray! For if, our Father, prayer is almost instinctive with us, coming easily and naturally to our hearts if not to our lips, yet how often we are unwise in how to pray or what things to pray for; so often seeming to be but infants crying in the night and with no language but a cry.

We pray for a vision that sees the contemporary and the passing against the background of the abiding and the everlasting; all the clamor and confusion, all the disorder of men against the purpose, the great and sovereign purpose of God; and in that let us find our comfort and our strength. The things that are seen are temporal. It isn't always easy to believe that, our Father. They seem to be so secure, so strong, and yet on the authority of the Holy Word we believe it. For all the clamor which they make in the world, they are temporal. The things that are not seen are eternal. Sometimes it is hard to believe that. They seem to be so remote often, so intangible and so vague, so far away and yet as near and as real as hope and love and faith and prayer.

We pray, our Father, for courage—courage to stand for right and truth without flinching and yet with patience and sympathy and understanding for those who do not see as we see and who do not think as we think about these matters. We pray for a willingness and even a determination to stand for our convictions faith-

fully and yet without bitterness of heart or resentment of spirit toward any man. We pray for wisdom that sees the difference between the transitory and the abiding, lest we spend ourselves and are spent for that which does not satisfy us, that which is not bread, clutching feverishly after that which has no lasting or true value. And we pray, our Father, for faith, faith to believe in the ultimate triumph of decency and goodness and right, and in that conviction be encouraged to do what we can in the place where we are, knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Give to us, we pray Thee, an alertness of mind, an eagerness of heart, sensitivity of spirit to all the gracious comings of God; the grace to listen and be still, to be still and to know that Thou art God, the nearest of all comrades, the greatest of all helpers, the truest of all friends. Hear us, our Father, not because we are worthy but because out of our need we lift our prayer in the faith and spirit of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.





Infininitely holy art Thou, O Lord God, and we come, therefore, to breathe Thy name in humility and with reverence upon our souls; but infinitely compassionate art Thou, of great mercy and of loving-kindness, and we come to speak Thy name with confidence. With what wistfulness we come to Thee, O God, who art the Father of us all, obedient and disobedient, loving and unloving. For that divine compulsion, that mysterious yet mighty something within us which bids us lift our hearts to Thee, open our minds to Thee, stretch hands of faith to Thee—for this we thank Thee. Thou hast made us for Thyself and without Thee our hearts would still be restless.

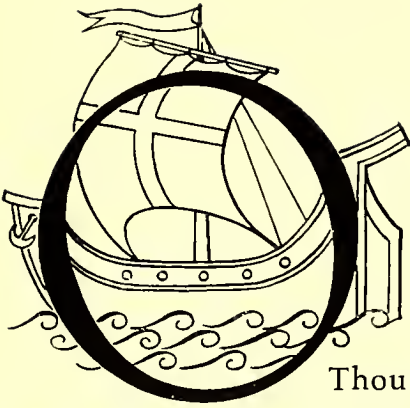
We come as children, knowing full well our own failures and faults, our own limitations and restrictions, our weakness and our waywardness and our wanderings; evil, sometimes; foolish, more often. But we come to Thee as Thy children knowing something of the goodness of the Father and we come, therefore, in a simple and serene reliance on Thy goodness.

In the Holy Word have we not read that Thou art He who settest the solitary in families, who brings the lonely home? And we come in the beginning of this week to pray Thy blessing upon the homes in which Thy people dwell; upon those who have united their lives in holy marriage and who walk the way of life

together; upon the fathers and the mothers and little children; upon those in middle age who take their own responsibilities and obligations of a different sort; upon those who walk now in the late eventime of life with the sunset full in their faces. Our needs vary, O God, with the varying circumstances of life but our need for Thee does not vary: the vision of Thyself; a consciousness of Thy nearness; a sense of the undergirding of the divine strength; the leading of the kindly Light—our need of these does not vary.

And so, through the changing circumstances of life, childhood and youth and middle age and eventime, give to us the leading of that kindly Light and the gentle pressure of Thy guiding hand, O God. Keep us in all Thy ways and give us at last a humble place in the great company of the redeemed who stand before the throne of God; for we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.





Thou infinite and eternal Spirit whom Jesus taught us to call the Father in heaven, we come now to worship Thee. Thou art forever beyond our full understanding of Thee but Thou art near to us in our hopes and in our needs, the aspirations and the longings and the wistfulness of our own spirit. From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God and yet the gracious and tender shepherd of all our hurrying years.

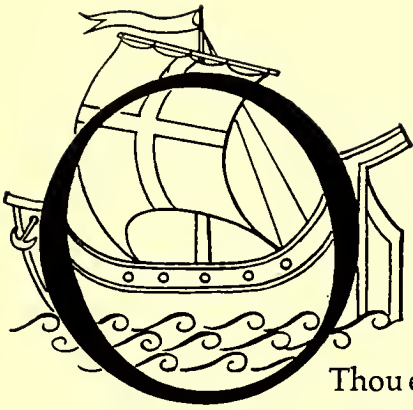
Behold us as we come, a company of people who bear the name and sign of Christ, taking on our lips great songs of praise, meditating together on portions of the holy Word, seeking Thee now in the mystic fellowship of prayer. Thou knowest us better than do our closest and our dearest friends. Always there is the mystery of personality and always the inevitable loneliness of it until we feel sometimes that those we love most and by whom we are loved most do not fully understand us. Thou dost know us better than we know ourselves. We are anything but clear, often, in our minds and certainly not sure of our own motives and purposes. Thou dost see us for what we are and as we are. Save us from the folly of any pretense or sham or make-believe as we come before Thee. Thou God seest us.

And yet we take comfort in this, our Father, that Thou dost see us likewise for what we long to be in the deepest part of our being,

the secret dreams and the hopes which lure us on. Our faults, our failures, our weaknesses—how many they are and we can only bring them to Thee and plead the infinite mercy of God. But look upon us in might, our Father, strengthening every noble purpose, undergirding every holy resolve, deepening every serious thought. Make us more sensitive to Thy truth, more responsive to Thy love, more obedient to Thy will.

In varying moods and with varying needs we come this morning, this company of worshipping people. Some are elated with hope and the future is bright with promise before them; for them we pray. But some are discouraged and heavy-hearted and the future looks anything but bright or promising—for them, too, we pray. For those who rejoice because they are surrounded by loved ones and for those who are bereaved and lonely—for them, we pray. Reverently, O God, and tenderly and confidently, too, we commend these people to Thy great love and to the fellowship of Thy Spirit. "They that wait for God shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." Let something of that holy experience come to every one of us. Amen.

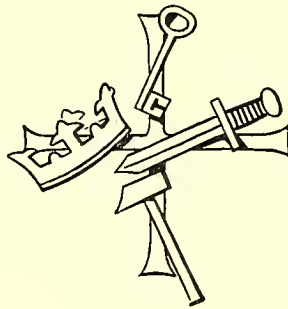




Thou eternal and infinite Spirit, most holy yet most loving, too, infinite in righteousness but of loving-kindness and of great mercy, perfect in wisdom yet patient with us Thy children in our erring and foolish ways; behold us now as we come, a company of people to worship Thee.

Here in this hour, our Father, we would test our minds by eternal truth and test our hearts by eternal values lest we look upon those things that are great as small and then think of those things which are petty as being important and sadly misplace all the emphasis of our living. Here, our Father, we would test our lives by the standards of the truth of the Gospel and by the light that shines from this Holy Book, Thy loving purpose and righteous will, lest we stumble and miss the way. Here, our Father, we would recover our sense of direction lest we go in the wrong way to find the things which we really seek. It is so easy for us to get lost in the world, our Father, because the world is so much with us and except we be forever on our guard, the things that are really important, the things that are really valuable because eternal, will get lost in the shuffle of life. Save us from that tragedy, we beseech Thee. We go through life busy about a score of things, active in many, many ways and yet may come to the end having missed the greatest treasure of all.

And especially in these days, our Father, with their particular significance, looking toward the passion of our Lord, His cross and His resurrection, give us the grace to test our hearts and minds more and more by the mind that was in Him, bringing every desire and purpose and thought into willing captivity to the mind of Christ and giving to Him a devotion and a loyalty beyond any that we have ever given before. We lift before Thee our desires in many ways but one supreme desire: a new sense of Thy presence; a new confidence in Thy nearness; a new assurance of Thy power; and as we wait before Thee, give to us, we beseech Thee, alert minds and make us eager of spirit. Let us know open-mindedness and warm-heartedness and let the words of our mouths but no less the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.





Thou Infinite Spirit, higher than our highest thought of Thee and yet near to our deepest need for Thee; forever beyond any adequate understanding and yet close to the aspirations and the yearnings of our hearts; we bless Thee, we give thanks to Thee. And we come to Thee by that great word by which Thou art best known, our Father in heaven. With a sense of dependence and yet with confidence we come this morning. So often we are erring children; so often foolish; so often wayward and willful and stubborn and so short-sighted; but Thy children still.

We thank Thee, our Father, for those ties which bind us to Thee; so mystic and yet so mighty, they keep tugging at our hearts. We thank Thee for that kinship which we feel between our own spirits and Thy Spirit, something within us which answers to Thee.

And in these particular Lenten days, this sacred and solemn season of the Church, give to us the grace of penitence and confession. Forbid that we should go through them with scarcely a thought of our own spiritual well-being or how far we are from being what Christ wants us to be.

Help us to follow in reverent imagination our Lord Jesus in these forty days, listening to what He says, seeing what He does,

catching something of His own radiant and splendid spirit and thus come to the blessed Easter morning, rejoicing in the power of an endless life. And in the struggle which we maintain for integrity and moral character, we pray Thy guidance and Thy strength. Some of us struggle with envy and selfishness; some with jealousy and pride; some with passions and tempers; some with bitterness of soul and unbrotherly spirit. Whatever the particular field on which we fight, may we be conscious that we do not fight alone but that Thou art with us, the great Ally of the soul, waiting to give us the grace and the courage which we need.

When the great hours of life come, help us to be valiant and courageous. But these come so infrequently; day after day the petty things. Help us to know how to deal with these without becoming petty. Make us big enough to deal with little things in a Christian spirit. And whatever the days may bring to us of duty, of task, of challenge, of opportunity, yes, of temptation, give to us, we pray Thee, grace to quit ourselves like good soldiers of Jesus Christ, workmen of God needing not to be ashamed. Amen.





God, our heavenly Father, Father of light and of life and of love, great Giver of every good gift, infinite and unfailing Source of joy and strength and of peace; we thank Thee for all of the hallowed associations of this day. We thank Thee because Thou hast shown us the empty tomb in the garden of Joseph, the tomb that could not hold our Lord captive, and our hearts are glad in the knowledge that death hath no longer any bitter and cruel dominion over us, for He has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

Give to us the joy of those who have not seen and yet have believed. Help us to exult in that eternal life which even now we may begin to possess and whose open secret is to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.

Hear our prayer, our Father, for those who come to this Easter day after cruel bereavement of loved ones. Above and through and beyond all the glad anthems of this day, may they hear the voice of Christ Himself saying, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die," and may that blessed assurance bring peace to their troubled hearts.

O God, who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, bring home

to all our hearts the true meaning of this holy day and help us to know in the deepest part of our being, whatever the circumstances of life may be, whatever the disorder and confusion of the world may be, help us to know that the last word is God's word, not man's and that the last word is with righteousness, not iniquity. It is with life, not death; with light and not darkness. Lighten, we beseech Thee, by Thy presence, every day and every road that our feet must walk, and when the evening comes, may it bring to us all the radiant hope of that day which shall endless be. Hear us because we bring our prayer in the name and faith of our risen and living Lord. Amen.





Thou art forever exalted on high, O God, yet Thou art not far from any one of us, the last and the least and the lowliest of Thy children. Thou art above us in glory and in power; Thou art around us in goodness and in love; Thou art within us in the whispering of a still, small voice. "Our best is but Thyself in us, our highest thought Thy will; to hear Thy voice, we need but love, to listen and be still." Forbid, our Father, that we should vainly imagine that we must make some arduous spiritual pilgrimage to find Thy dwelling place. Help us to understand, rather, that Thou art here. We have but to open our hearts and our minds to Thee and realize that Thou art beside us, the nearest of comrades and the truest of friends.

We do not come this morning pleading that Thou wilt be here. Thou art here. We come praying earnestly that we might not fail to be conscious of Thy presence. And especially, our Father, this Sunday following the blessed Easter day, we thank Thee for the presence of the living Christ among us, the living Lord of life who rose a victor over the grave and who comes to give a greater foundation to the hopes and loves and dreams of men. Help us to understand that "we may not climb the heavenly steeps to bring the Lord Christ down; in vain we search the lowest deeps, for Him no depths can drown. But warm, sweet, tender, even yet a present

help is He; and faith has still its Olivet, and love its Galilee." Let that blessed experience come home with fresh power and meaning to us through worship together this morning.

We thank Thee, our Father, for all those in every walk of life, by any name or sign, who are servants of truth and goodness; for all good and faithful administrators who are concerned with the establishment and the maintenance of justice among men; for all wise teachers who set the feet of youth in the ways that are right and good; for business men with large financial interests who seek yet to be a brother to their brothers on the pilgrimage of life; for the mothers of little children in the homes; for doctors and for scientists who seek to relieve distress and to blaze trails to new adventures in life; for men, whatever the particular walk of life in which they find themselves or the special nature of the work they do, that they may do it as unto God and in His holy sight. Let now, we pray Thee, the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.





Thou Infinite and eternal Spirit, who dwellest in perfect light and yet art our Comrade as we walk the shadowed ways of earth; who art from everlasting to everlasting and yet the gracious and tender Shepherd of all the hurrying years; who art high above the earth and yet not far from the least and the lowliest of Thy children; we praise Thee, we bless Thee, we give thanks to Thee.

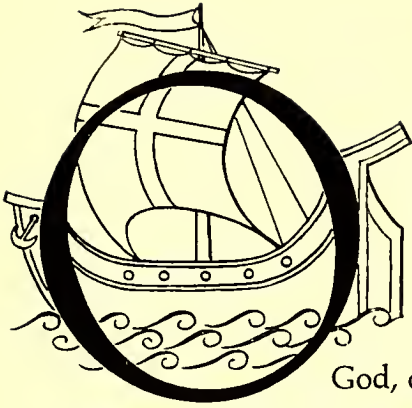
We come in this holy place and on this holy day with their associations, their memories, their traditions; we come to worship. Thou art God and we are but men, and we come to open our hearts to Thee, to open our minds to Thee, not praying that Thou wilt be here, for Thou art here, but praying rather that no one of us might be so dull of spirit as to be indifferent to Thy presence. We do not come in this hour of worship to force our way upon a reluctant and unwilling God; we come, on the contrary, accepting Thy gracious and royal invitation: Whosoever will, let him come. And so we come this morning to worship here, where quietly to listen is to hear Thy voice; here, where to lift our eyes of faith is to behold the King in His beauty, in glory and in strength.

Give us the grace, we pray Thee, O God, to see the baffling and confusing present against the background of Thy righteous and sovereign purpose and by that vision may we be steadied and up-

held. Help us to know that "tho' the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet," and in that holy confidence let none make us afraid.

We lift our prayer for those who come into Thy presence with gladness and with lightness of heart; may they find here something that will express their gratitude and their thankfulness. But we pray for those who are heavy of heart and who have lost much of their music. We pray that something here may remind them that the treasure of God is with them and that Thou art He who giveth songs in the night. We pray for those who stride their way in boisterous and vigorous health that they may know how to be humble. We pray, likewise, for those who grope their way more slowly and sometimes painfully that they might be delivered from despair and from fear. We pray for those whose faith is strong, that soars and sings in confidence, but we pray likewise for those who grope in doubt and fear.

Whatever may be the particular need we have this morning, whatever the particular burden under which we stagger sometimes, whatever the problem we face or the temptation with which we grapple, Thou art all we need. Give to us, we pray Thee, such a sense of Thy presence and of Thy nearness here today, O God, that we may lift up our heads and lift up our hearts. Amen.



God, our Light in darkness, our Strength in weakness, our Help in ages past, our Hope for years to come; help us to see Thee lifted up above the strife and turmoil of time yet not far from every one of us. Help us to see Thee high above the earth yet brooding over it and working through it to accomplish Thy holy will; and by that may we be comforted. For it does comfort us, O God, to know that when men are their worst, Thou art still infinitely good, infinitely wise, infinitely loving; and in that we find our comfort and our strength.

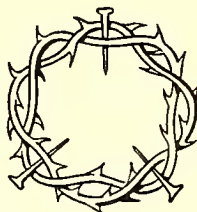
Forgive us, we beseech Thee, our sins. Not only for the things that we have done which we ought not to have done, although their name is legion, but forgive us the things we have not done and should have done, for how many they are; the valor we have never won; the good things we have not accomplished and sometimes not even attempted—carelessness and neglect as much and maybe more than our sinfulness. These, too, we bring in confession this morning and in penitence and plead the mercy of our God.

Let Thy Spirit rest upon the peoples of the world. In every land we pray that Thou wilt expose the hypocrisies of those who, under the name of patriotism, would despoil the liberties of men. And in every land we pray that Thou wilt restrain the evil desires and

the evil purposes of evil men.

Create in us, we pray Thee, a sense of common brotherhood. Ever and again we are conscious and must be of those things which divide us. Help us, likewise, to be mindful of those things which unite us; and if only we have eyes to see, those things which divide us are minor and those things which bind us are major.

Give us then, eyes that see. Give us minds that understand. Give us hearts that love and are filled with goodwill. Pour out upon all people Thy spirit, we pray. Give to us that wisdom which is from above which is full of mercy and full of faith—rich in forbearance and rich in forgiveness. Bring the peoples of the world to a just mind and a pure heart, and bring men everywhere out of the terrible bondage of fear into an era of goodwill and peace. Amen.





Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God." And so we come in this hour of our worship to cast the anchor of our faith in Thee, we who are children of time and yet heirs of the everlasting; we who are exiles from home but who seek our home in God; who are pilgrims in the earth yet pilgrims of the infinite, in whose heart Thou hast set the larger hope.

We thank Thee for the associations which cluster around this holy place; the prayers, the praises, the yearning for God through the changing years. In that holy tradition we come to voice our praise and our prayers and to give some expression to the deep yearning of our hearts. We thank Thee for the associations of this holy day that calls us from the busy cares of life to meditate for a little while on the meaning of life and the direction and the purpose of it, lest we be busy yet not busy enough.

In this holy place, then, and on this holy day we lift before Thee our burdens and our needs, our hopes and our fears, our desires and our dreams. O God, may each one of us find that which we need most in this hour.

We pray that we might be gentle and kind with one another on the pilgrimage of life. Make us more considerate and patient,

more sympathetic and more understanding. How little we really know of those whom we think we know pretty well and even those whom we know very well—the fears which may be in their hearts; the temptations with which they grapple; and if we knew more about them, would not we be marked by a great tenderness for them?

We pray that we may have the strength and the courage of our convictions, willing to stand up and to speak out. But, O God, give us the grace to do all of this with humility of spirit, in kindness and out-going good will, for we are the children of God who makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and who sends refreshing rain without discrimination upon all who need. Hear the prayer that we make for the bereaved whose hearts cry out for the sound of a voice that is still; may they know Thy comfort and Thy peace: and let the meditations of our hearts and the words of our mouths be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.





Almighty God, who hast given us grace, at this time, with one accord to make our common supplications unto Thee; and dost promise that, when two or three are gathered together in Thy Name, Thou wilt grant their request; fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of Thy servants, as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world knowledge of Thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting.”

So, our Father, in words which are not our own and are borrowed from the great ritual of the Church, we yet breathe the desires and petitions of our own hearts. Thou hast given us grace to assemble in Thy name and in this place on this holy day. If Thou art the one who hears prayer, Thou art likewise He who inspires prayer; from Thee every good prayer cometh. Our desire to draw near to Thee was born with Thee. We love Thee because Thou hast first loved us and the love which we confess is only an echo love which Thou hast for all the sons of men. That we have come to this place today is because we were drawn by Thy Spirit to whom we come and whose benedictions we seek.

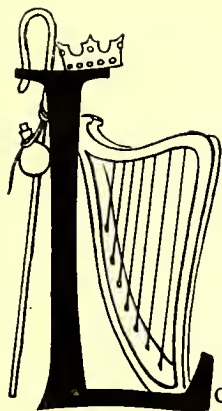
And we make a common supplication. To be sure, we come from varying circumstances, bearing different burdens, wrestling with many kinds of temptations, needing many things. And yet beneath all other needs but one need: a new vision of Thyself; a

new sense of Thy presence; a new consciousness that Thou art God, our refuge and strength, and beside Thee there is no other. For with that vision and with that consciousness there comes light for the paths our feet must tread; there comes strength for the burdens which we must carry; there comes grace to resist the temptations which come to us and courage to fight the battles of life: a common supplication to Thee.

And we pray that Thou wilt fulfill our petitions as may be most expedient for us, hearing us not for what we ask but for what we need. Our limitations are so very many, our knowledge is so imperfect, our very wills are wayward and stubborn. We would not come this morning to pray that Thou wilt give us what we ask excepting as what we ask is what Thou seest we need. And grant us in this world such knowledge of Thy truth as may make for eternal life through all the years to come.

Deepen our faith, we pray Thee; broaden our horizons; clarify our visions; purify our purposes; strengthen our wills; and give us the grace to bring every thought and desire into harmony with Thy will. Amen.





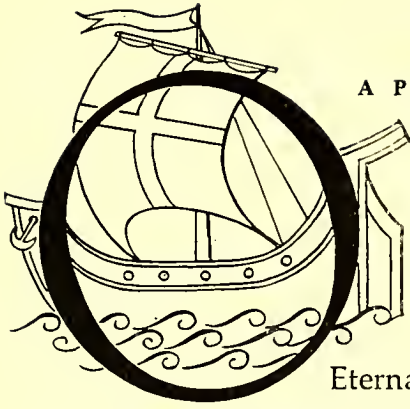
Lord, Thou hast searched us and known us. Thou knowest our downsitting and our uprising. Thou art acquainted with all our ways and understandest our very thought afar off. Whither shall we flee from Thy spirit or whither shall we go from Thy presence? If we ascend up into heaven, Thou art there, beyond our farthest reach, our highest hope, our noblest aspiration; and if we make our beds in hell, Thou art there." We may not sink so low or stray so far as to be beyond the reach of Thy love and mercy, O God. The darkness and the light are both alike to Thee. Help us to come, therefore, with the grace of humility, an openness of heart and mind, and forbid that we should make any kind of pretense when we are in the presence of the holy God who knowest us far better than we know ourselves and who dost see us for what we *really* are.

We are Thy children, our Father, and as children we come to Thee. But be patient with us when we behave not in a childlike but in a childish fashion—irritable and petulant and shortsighted and selfish and willful. Make us more gentle and kind with one another, mindful of their rights, considerate of their needs—those who walk the pilgrimage of life beside us. We may not know the burdens and the cares, the heartaches and the loneliness of those who are all around us. How cheerful and how confi-

dent they seem to be, but how anxious and fearful they might really be if we but knew. How free they seem to be from any adversity or difficulty, yet if we but knew the facts, what burdens might press down upon them.

We pray for those in high places, O God, where responsibilities are enormous and where authority is far-reaching, that they be steadfast and true. And we pray for those who walk the common and the lowly ways of earth lest they be disheartened, thinking that what they do does not matter. We pray for those who are strong that in their strength they might be steadfast in the service of right, and we pray for those who are weak that they might be made strong. We pray for those who walk in the sunshine, but we pray likewise for those who grope amid the shadows. We lift our gratitude to Thee for those whose hearts are filled with laughter and singing, but we pray now for those whose hearts have lost their music and their song. Whatever may be our needs, speak to us what we need most to hear. Bring to us the gifts that we need most to receive, and may our minds be open and our hearts eager as we wait now before Thee. Amen.





A PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

Eternal God, before whom the centuries pass in solemn procession and in whose sight the generations of men come and go, we praise and worship Thee. Thou art from everlasting to everlasting, yet our Comrade and Guide, the Shepherd of all our hurrying years.

Graciously Thou hast led us through the year now ending. Its days have been mingled good and evil. We rejoice in all its goodness and confess humbly our failures and folly. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have been too little concerned with having the mind that was in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Now we bring the record of the old year to Thee. For Thy many blessings we are grateful; for our blunders we are penitent and resolve, by Thy grace, to write the record of the new year with fewer stains. Be our Guide through whatever may be dark and uncertain; our Guard against all that would threaten the welfare of our souls; our Comfort in hours of distress and grief; our Strength in every time of need; and may all the years bring us closer to Thee, great lover of us all. Amen.





A PRAYER FOR EASTER

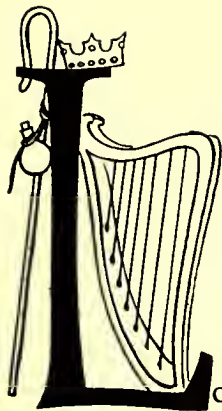
Thou who art eternal and whose years know no end, we who are children of time yet heirs of eternity come now to worship Thee. Thou hast made us pilgrims of the infinite and hast set in our hearts a deathless hope.

Especially we rejoice in all the hallowed associations of this day. We have seen the Empty Tomb and our hearts are glad in the knowledge that death no longer has bitter and cruel dominion over us. Thou hast put down death and brought life and immortality to light in Jesus our Lord. Give us the joy and peace of those who live in fellowship with Him and with Thee, and help us to live in the glory and power of an endless life, living as they should who are the children of God and who have eternity to live in.

Help us to work with patience and to wait in hope and make us steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. Lead us through all the changing scenes of life and at last, of Thy great mercy, bring us to a place in the company of the redeemed who stand before Thy throne. Amen.



A PRAYER FOR MEMORIAL DAY



Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God." Our hearts are comforted in the faith that Thou art our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast and our eternal home.

As this day of precious memories brings more clearly to our hearts and minds those we have loved and lost, we give Thee humble thanks that they are lost to us only for a while. On this side the sable curtain of death as on the other we are in the hands of our Father whose hands are very strong yet very tender.

We bless Thy name for all fond memories and all living hopes and for our deep conviction "that life is ever Lord of death and Love can never lose its own." As we think today, and not without a tinge of sadness, of those who once walked with us but who are now in the immediate presence of God, we pray for grace to keep our faces in the light and for strength to walk in paths that are right and true. Give to us, soon or late, we humbly beseech Thee, an abundant entrance into Thine everlasting Kingdom where we shall be forever with the Lord.





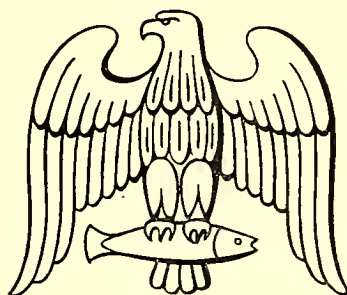
A PRAYER FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY

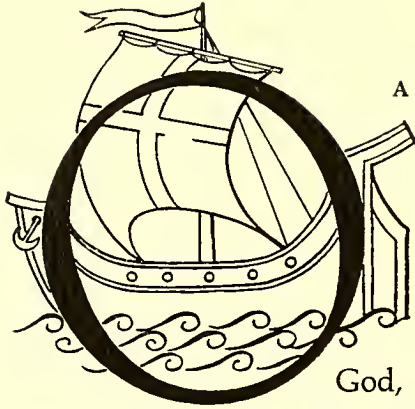
God of our fathers and our God, we come to-day in devout and humble worship of Thee. We bless and praise Thee for Thy guidance through the years that have gone. Not without dangers and difficulties Thou hast brought us to this hour. May we not be unmindful of the leading of the kindly Light and the gentle pressure of Thy guiding hand. Give us such a sense of all Thy mercies that our hearts may be truly thankful and that we may show forth Thy praise, not only with our lips but in our lives and might give ourselves to Thy service to walk before Thee in righteousness all our days.

May this season be one of rich memories and of blessed hope and of high resolve, our purposes lifted to new levels of patriotism. Teach us to know that "the tumult and the shouting dies; the captains and the kings depart; still stands Thine ancient sacrifice, an humble and a contrite heart." Thou dost dwell with the contrite of spirit and humble of heart. Give us that contrition and humility that will make our hearts a fit dwelling for Thee.

Hear our prayer for the President and those associated with him in the affairs of government. Help them to be humble that they may be truly wise with that wisdom which is from above. We pray for those who take counsel together among the nations that they may seek the paths of peace and of righteousness that there

may be peace. Bring the world out of the bondage of fear into an era of friendliness and of goodwill; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.





A PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS

God, who didst make the ancient sky bright with the shining star of Bethlehem, shine, we beseech Thee, in our hearts to banish the darkness and bring in the dawn. Thou who didst guide the steps of Wise Men from the distant East to ancient Judea, guide us, we pray Thee, who so often grope amid the shadows and miss the way of life. We would find ourselves in the good company of those who hear a multitude of the heavenly host singing about the glory of God and peace on earth, goodwill to men. In reverent imagination we would join the caravan of those who make spiritual pilgrimage to Bethlehem to see this great thing which is come to pass. And in the midst of all the busy comings and goings of these days and all the delightful confusion of them, we would be no strangers to their deepest and their holiest meaning.

We thank Thee for our families and our friends; for homes and loved ones and all the joys of this festive season. But most of all we thank Thee for the revelation of Thine infinite love in Jesus Christ, our Lord. He has given us a clearer vision of Thee and shown us the way to eternal life. Into our restless and troubled world he brought the inspiration of perfect goodness and perfect love. Help us to hear above all the confusion and turmoil of the world the Angel Song.

Grant, we pray, that we might have grace in these days to make all necessary and wise preparation and then, having laid them all aside, to keep open doors and wide spaces in our hearts where holy expectations may throng with their heavenly ministries. Let our minds be alert to all the gracious comings of God. Let our hearts be tender and responsive to all the influence of His presence. Breathe upon us now Thy spirit, O living Christ, as we wait before Thee. Amen.



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